

Statement from Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax released the following statement:

I'd like to begin by emphasizing how important it is for us to listen to women when they come forward with allegations of sexual assault or harassment. As a former prosecutor and someone who is close with a number of women who are survivors of sexual assault, I know that many survivors of sexual assault suffer in silence, and it is absolutely essential to their healing and our healing as a culture that we give all survivors the space and support to voice their stories.

Regarding the allegation that has been made against me – while this allegation has been both surprising and hurtful, I also recognize that no one makes charges of this kind lightly, and I take it and this situation very seriously.

This has been an emotional couple of days for me and my family. And in my remarks on Monday, I think you could hear how emotional dealing with an allegation that I know is not true has been for me.

As I have stated previously, fifteen years ago, when I was an unmarried law student, I had a consensual encounter with the woman who made the allegation. At no time did she express to me any discomfort or concern about our interactions, neither during that encounter, nor during the months following it, when she stayed in touch with me, nor the past fifteen years. She in no way indicated that anything that had happened between us made her uncomfortable.

The first indication I had that she felt that anything that had happened between us fifteen years ago made her uncomfortable was when I was contacted by a national media organization shortly before my inauguration in 2018. I voluntarily met with their staff, in person, told them what I knew about the encounter and responded to all of their questions. I also shared the allegation and my account of the events with a number of leaders in Richmond because then, as now, I have nothing to hide.

I would like to encourage the media, my supporters, and others to treat both the woman who made this allegation and my family with respect for how painful this situation can be for everyone involved. I wish her no harm or humiliation, nor do I seek to denigrate her or diminish her voice. But I cannot agree with a description of events that I know is not true.

If we learned anything from the past week, it's that we have to listen to people's experiences to learn from them so we can make progress. Like many of you, I've spent time over the last several days discussing difficult subjects with people very close to me. I believe that if we

continue to listen, we will continue to make the progress that makes the Commonwealth of Virginia a unique place, not only in the South, but in the United States of America.

These are unprecedented and difficult times. We have the opportunity to prove ourselves worthy of the challenge and come together. I look forward to continuing my work to unify the Commonwealth.